

**Land and Water Conservation Forum III
Task Force Meeting
September 22, 2006
L&C Tower - Nashville, TN
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Meeting Notes**

Present

Jim Brown, Tennessee River Gorge Trust
Doug Delaney, TDOT
Margo Farnsworth, Cumberland River Compact
Bonnie Gamble, TDEC Recreation Education Services
John Gregory, TWRA
Julius Johnson, Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
Anne Marshall, TDEC Recreation Education Services
Carol Thompson, TDEC Recreation Education Services

Notes

The Task Force opened by reviewing comments and work product from the Land and Water Conservation Forum II held February 23, 2006. The three common categories they found among the forum focus group results were: GIS, Planning Coordination, and Education.

Discussions then revolved around these three topics:

- **GIS**

The group was unanimous in identifying the top priority: *Developing a coordinated GIS effort that integrated the GIS databases from various groups and agencies.* Discussion noted that most external groups were unclear regarding state's GIS efforts and what is future direction of GIS in state government. Inquiry was made whether it is possible for non-governmental agencies (NGO's) to access or add to state GIS databases.

TDOT, TWRA (who manages one of the oldest and most extensive state GIS systems), TDEC and Agriculture are all doing their own GIS work and running into challenges in compatibility of sharing and accessing information. Doug Delaney shared that there is discussion between the Secretary of State's Office and Office of Information Resources (OIR) on how to best integrate various departments' GIS information. Main issues, questions and ideas included:

1. How to share GIS information efficiently without duplicating each other's work.
2. Coordination of user guidelines to protect sensitive conservation areas (e.g. Division of Natural Areas), yet offer a transparent system that is accessible to the public. Should a user license be required to access a GIS database?

3. Partnering with Development Districts and capitalizing on their work with communities; using soil maps and other tools to provide rapid assessments.
4. Educating the local governments on use of GIS data to determine water and utility location to prevent sprawling development. Concern that local governments are allowing utilities to lay water lines in and across important conservation areas. Presence of infrastructure often spurs development.

- **Planning Process**

There is a need for a coordinated master plan to share with local government officials. An example is the Cumberland River Compact program of providing a “menu” of educational courses/offerings for local governments on all the different aspects of watershed protection. The staffs from the various cooperative agencies provide their own curriculum or class. This could be expanded further to provide a more comprehensive conservation package that would cover land, water, wildlife diversity, etc. (a “tool box” so to speak). Currently the issue is so big no one has been identified or is taking the lead to coordinate efforts between state, local and federal agencies. Main issues, questions and ideas included:

1. Use scheduled conferences that attract local government officials and present land and water conservation program or track.
Example: TML conference, MTAS/CTAS, Development Districts.
2. Target education toward a broad group, but at a detailed level. One group will have the responsibility to develop, assemble or produce the components of the program, or “tool box”.
3. Creation of an interagency task force through an Executive Order to spur coordination of county, state, and federal planning. Include non-profits. Possibly assign this responsibility to an existing commission? Assignment needs executive level to see implementation takes place.
4. Land fragmentation is a threat - there is a need to formulate a program to show that leaving land agricultural can be as profitable or valuable as development, e.g. there is value in owning land that is not developed. Program should not be anti-development, but should support, develop and sustain agricultural activities.
5. Creation and maintenance of a one-stop Web site or printed resource that would provide individuals/agencies with conservation information such as: funding sources (private, state, federal), conservation assistance and programs, conservation law, and contact listings.

- **Education**

Every age group could benefit from conservation education. While future support for conservation requires attention on children in grades K-12, Tennessee adults – opinion leaders and decision makers - are just as important right now.

1. Promote the adoption of conservation as part of the curriculum for Grades 5-6 in science and mathematics.
2. Seek federal funding for the promotion of sciences to pay for program.
3. Explore Deputy Commissioner Paul Sloan's idea on creating a Center for Environmental Literacy.
4. Promote the new Tennessee Youth Conservation Corps (TNYCC).

Summary of Next Steps

1. Provide a written summary of meeting to Task Force members for additional comments.
2. Develop questions about the three main identified areas for response from conservation agencies and non-profits through survey. This will help determine direction for next Land and Water Forum.
3. Provide a press release of the work of the task group. Example – that they held meeting, identified important issues for continued work and discussion and planning next forum.
4. Contact Rob Sherrill and Andy Lyon about getting Forum date set with Governor's office. Tentative at Montgomery Bell on February 21-22, 2007.
5. Allow exhibits (six-foot tables) at the Forum for groups and presentations. They can reserve by a certain date.
6. Consider hosting related meetings prior to the full Land and Water Forum plenary sessions that would offer information exchange on focus topics such as Land Trusts, State Parks and Natural Areas. These pre-events could be held from 8:00a.m. - 11:30a.m. with the Land and Water Conservation Forum III starting at 12:00 noon or 1:00 p.m. on that same day.
7. Next Task Force meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 3 from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Location is the 17th Floor, L&C Tower, Nashville